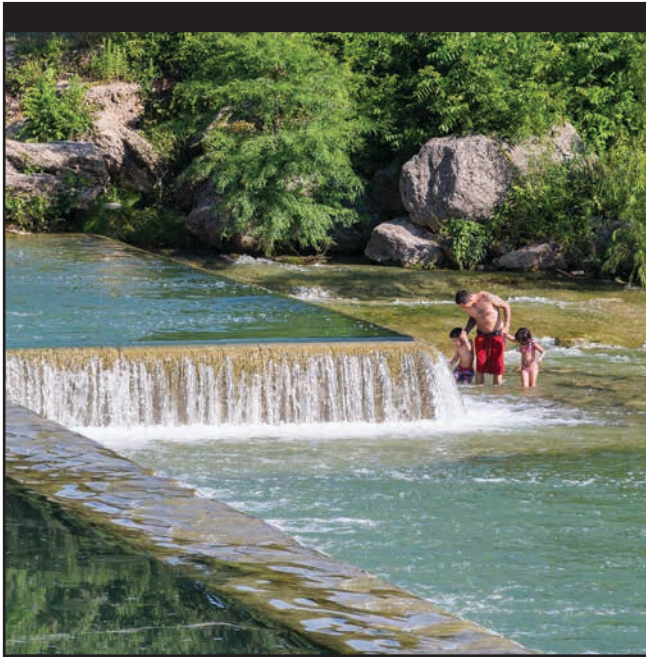


Interpretive Guide to:

BLANCO

STATE PARK



MEANDERING THROUGH THE PARK, THE BLANCO RIVER SHOWCASES WHITE LIMESTONE TERRACES, PECAN FLATS, AND MAJESTIC BALD CYPRESS TREES. THE BLUE-GREEN WATERS FLOW OVER TWO DAMS, CONSTRUCTED BY THE CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS IN THE 1930S. THESE TRANQUIL FALLS ARE CALLING YOU TO TAKE A DIP, THROW OUT A LINE, OR FLOAT IN SPRING-FED WATERS.



This 104-acre park provides a surprising variety of recreational opportunities. However you enjoy the park, help us care for it by preserving the cultural and natural resources.

- ✦ Preserve the integrity of the historic CCC structures by using them with respect.
- ✦ Hike only on designated trails and stay out of closed areas.
- ✦ Leave no trace. Keep your park and river clean by not littering.
- ✦ Preserve the park for future generations and leave plants, animals, and fossils where you find them.
- ✦ Get involved by joining the Friends of Blanco State Park, a volunteer, non-profit organization committed to the preservation, protection, and improvement of the park.

FURTHER READING

Texas State Parks and the CCC: The Legacy of the Civilian Conservation Corps by Cynthia Brandimarte with Angela Reed, Texas A&M University Press, 2013

Parks for Texas by James Wright Steely, University of Texas Press, 1999.

For more information about programs or volunteering, contact the park or visit our website and Facebook page.

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SPRINGS OF LIFE

The Blanco River emerges from springs bubbling up through permeable layers of limestone 19 miles west of the park. The Trinity aquifer and more natural springs feed the river along its winding path. You can even see two springs flowing inside the park.

Not surprisingly, the river and springs attracted Native Americans, the Spanish, and early settlers to the area. In 1721, a Spanish expedition named the river "Blanco" for its white limestone banks. During the 1800s, European settlers built homes and grazed cattle, using the available water and land.



Great blue heron

The flowing water and landscape are teeming with an array of wildlife that hunt, forage, and raise their young here. Birds nest in the towering bald cypress and American sycamore trees that anchor the riverbanks. Great blue herons perch atop the dams waiting for the right moment to spear a largemouth bass. The stouter green heron wades in the shallow waters in search of smaller fish. Keep your eyes open for spiny softshell turtles, raccoons, and water snakes that make their homes along the river.



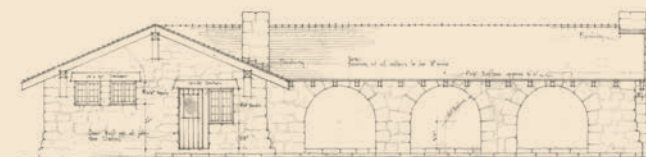
Floodwaters plowed through Blanco State Park in 2015.

WILD AND UNRULY

Rugged hills, spring-fed creeks, and steep limestone banks draw people to the Texas Hill Country. But heavy and sudden rains can cause the otherwise docile rivers to become wild and unruly, giving the Hill Country another nickname: Flash Flood Alley.

Heavy rains hammered the Hill County in May 2015 and saturated the Blanco River watershed. On May 23, 10 to 13 inches of rain fell within 24 hours. The river rose an astounding 30 feet. Water rushed through Blanco State Park, and lapped at the bottom of the Highway 281 bridge. These floodwaters caused widespread devastation and, tragically, 11 deaths downstream.

STORIES IN STONE



The Great Depression of the 1930s brought hardship to the nation. Many people faced a tough time with few jobs, no money, and little hope. President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Civilian Conservation Corps (CCC) in 1933 to help conserve our natural resources, and restore the nation's hope. The CCC provided unemployed young men, ages 18-25, the opportunity to gain skills and education while building parks and doing resource conservation. In return, they received housing, three square meals a day, and medical care. Moreover, they received \$30 a month each, \$25 being sent home to support their families.

Also in 1933, local landowners sold their land to the State of Texas to create a park. Within a month, CCC Company 854 arrived in Blanco. They worked for 11 months, shaping the land into the park we know today. The company of 177 men constructed dams, roads, bridges, and other park facilities, including the stone Picnic Pavilion.

You can still use many of the park facilities built by CCC enrollees, a testament to their craftsmanship. Picnic at a stone table, or swim in a pool created by the CCC-constructed dam. These structures have withstood the test of time and survived many floods, including the historic 2015 flood.



JOHN CHANDLER

